

SUNDAY THEOSIS #1-26

Tea with the Theotokos

By Marianne Sailus

Meditation 7

“And a Sword Will Pierce Your Heart”

Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to the restoration of Israel and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took Him into his arms and blessed God; and he said: “Now, Master, you are letting your servant go in peace as You promised; for my eyes have seen the salvation which You have made ready in the sight of

the nations; a light of revelation for the gentiles and glory for Your people Israel.” As the child’s father and mother were wondering at the things that were being said about Him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, “Look, He is destined for the fall and for the rise of



many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is opposed, and a sword will pierce your soul too, so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.” (Luke 2:25-35)

Consider the thoughts and emotions of Mary as she listened to the words of the Elder Simeon! First, he praises her Child in what is known in Latin as, “The Nunc Dimittis” – or “Now You may dismiss.” This is repeated during every Vespers service in the Eastern Christian Churches towards the end of the service. It is a prophecy of the greatness of the Child Jesus and all that He would be destined to accomplish for His own People, as well as for those who had not as yet accepted Him (i.e., the Gentiles).

Then Simeon turns to Mary and gives her a grim glimpse of what her Son’s future will entail: “Look, He is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is opposed, and a sword will pierce your soul too, so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.” What mother would ever want to hear these words about her precious Infant?

We can only wonder what Mary thought when Simeon spoke these words to her. Perhaps she was incredulous and could not begin to comprehend them, holding in her arms the Divine Baby. Maybe she hoped that these were only Simeon’s words, and not a true prophecy, and that her Son will live a relatively normal life with her and Joseph until the time appointed Him by God was to be fulfilled – whatever that would mean.

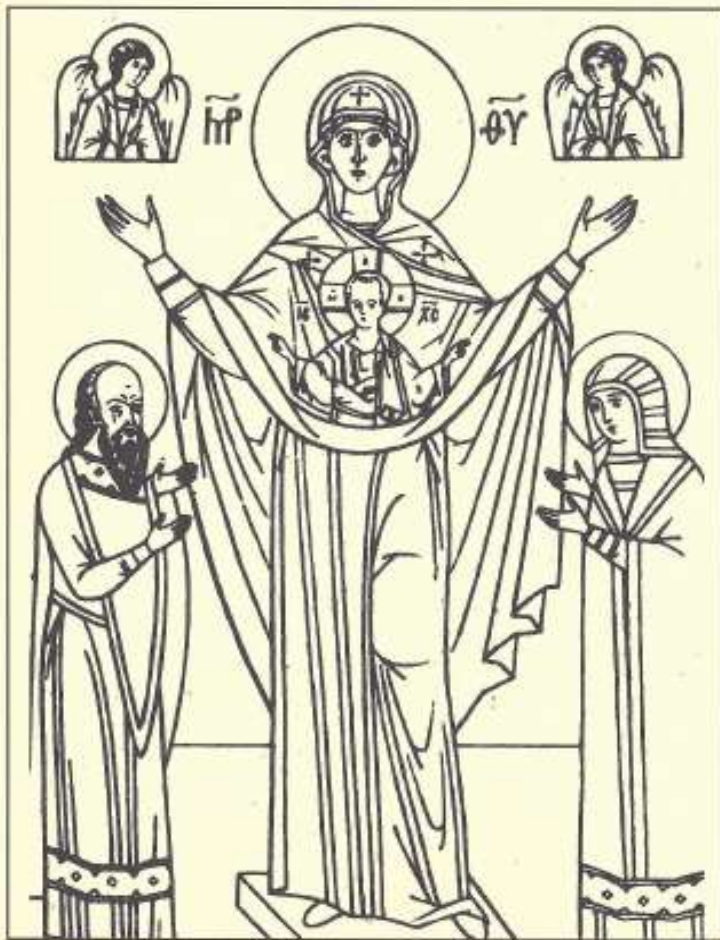
In any case, Simeon’s words had to be devastating to this new mother! What did this mean? When would she understand its ramifications? How would they come to be? There had to be many thoughts swirling around in Mary’s head that day.

Most Holy Mother, you endured much, even very early in Your Son’s life. Though you may have wondered what Simeon’s words meant, you never doubted God’s plan. Help us to be able to endure bad news when it comes to us. Strengthen our faith to be a mirror of your own, so that no matter what comes, we may accept it as God’s will, and deal with it accordingly. Amen.

Meditation 8

“An Unspoken Sorrow”

After they had left, suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Get up, take the Child and His mother with you, and escape into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the



Child and do away with Him.’ So Joseph got up and, taking the Child and His mother with him, left that night for Egypt, where he stayed until Herod was dead. This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: I called My Son out of Egypt. Herod was furious on realizing that he had been fooled by the wise men, and in Bethlehem and its surrounding district he had all the male children killed who were two years old or less, reckoning by the date he had been careful to ask the wise men. Then were fulfilled the words spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamenting and weeping bitterly: it is Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted because they are no more. A f t e r Herod’s death, suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, ‘Get up, take the Child and His mother

with you and go back to the land of Israel, for those who wanted to kill the Child are dead.’ (Matthew 2:13-20).

While Mary does briefly speak in the Gospels of St. Luke (primarily) and St. John (briefly), there is no record of her words neither in the Gospels of St. Mark nor St. Matthew, the latter being the only other evangelist to record the conception and infancy of Christ.

On the other hand, Mary is mentioned in the early chapters of the Gospel of St. Matthew, mostly in relation to St. Joseph. While St. Luke tells of the Annunciation, St. Matthew tells how the Angel Gabriel reveals to St. Joseph in a dream how he is to take Mary as his wife without hesitation. “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a Son and you must name Him Jesus, because He is the One who is to save His people from their sins’ (Matthew 1:20-21).

In this second part of the story of the visitation of the Magi, we hear how again, in a dream, Joseph is prompted to awake, take Jesus

and Mary, and flee to Egypt, as Herod is seeking Jesus to kill Him. Joseph obeys, but Herod still kills all the boys in Bethlehem and its surroundings two years of age and younger. At some point, Mary and Joseph must have heard of the slaying of the innocents, and while relieved that God spared Jesus, they must have been deeply grieved for the other parents whose children were slain in order that Jesus’ life might be spared at this time.

Most Holy Mother, your love for all children must make you very sad, at times, when you see children aborted, abused, victims of poverty, war, poor parenting, and evil governments. Look mercifully upon all of your children throughout this hurting world. Embrace them, as you would have embraced each of the Holy Innocents, and surround all children with your maternal love, even when there may be no one else to provide this consolation for them. Amen.

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